

Police Arrest Man Wanting to Bomb Cleveland Fourth of July Celebration

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Demetrius Pitts.

Photo courtesy of Cleveland.com.[/caption]

Summary: An American citizen was arrested for planning a terrorist attack in Cleveland.

An Ohio man was arrested on Sunday for planning a terrorist act that would have occurred on the Fourth of July. Authorities said that the man wanted to express his desire to join al Qaeda by bombing a holiday celebration in downtown Cleveland.

"Just last week, this defendant was walking around downtown Cleveland conducting reconnaissance on what he believed was a large-scale attack," U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio Justin Herdman said. "He looked for a place to park a van full of explosives."

[Cleveland.com](#) reported that the man, Demetrius N. Pitts, 48, plotted to set off a bomb at the fireworks celebration in downtown Cleveland. Authorities said that he wanted to "strike at the values at the very core of our nation."

Pitts said that he wanted to join the terrorist group and kill US citizens, and he revealed this to an undercover FBI agent. Pitts is a U.S. citizen from Philadelphia, but he became radicalized and changed his name to two aliases, Abdur Raheem Rafeeq and Salah ad-Deem Osama Waleed.

Pitts has been charged with one count of attempting to provide material support to al Qaeda, and he was arrested on Sunday afternoon. He faces 20 years in federal prison if convicted.

Pitts has expressed his hatred for the US between 2015 and 2017. In 2018, an undercover FBI agent introduced himself to Pitts under the guise of being an al Qaeda "brother." Pitts revealed his plans to bomb Cleveland to the agent, and the FBI said that they had Pitts' cell phone, which contained two videos in which he pledged his allegiance to al Qaeda.

FBI Special Agent in Charge Stephen Anthony said that it was unclear if Pitts had access to a bomb or knew how to make one, but Anthony said Pitts was intent on an attack.

"Law enforcement cannot sit back and wait for Mr. Pitts to commit a violent attack," Anthony said. "We don't have the luxury of hoping an individual decides not to harm someone or get others to act, especially when his continued, repeated intentions were to do exactly that."

If Pitts had gone through with his plan, he would have attacked Voinovich Park on Wednesday, authorities said. The location was near the U.S. Coast Guard station and the Anthony J. Celebrezze Federal Building.

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What do you think of the FBI's arrest of Demetrius N. Pitts? Let us know in the comments below.